

# **Our Community**

**Presented by  
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I will present three ideas (or “Solutions”) for removing eye care access barriers within our communities.

## **1. Incentives for Comprehensive Eye Care**

How many of us have thought about having the following conversation with a parent or other aging loved one?

“Mom, I wonder if you should still be driving. Your vision just isn’t what it used to be. I’m worried that you may have an accident and injure yourself or someone else.”

What if we can turn the negative of fear of loss into a positive idea?

“Mom, I understand that in this state, a senior citizen who gets a comprehensive eye exam can get a discount on her auto insurance.”

The State of Ohio is currently considering such a program. By encouraging programs such as this on the state or local level, we can increase the probability that all seniors will have proper eye care, and be more likely to maintain their independence. This will benefit our communities in several ways. First, it will help by reducing preventable vision loss from age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma. It will also make our roads safer, and even decrease the number of broken hips from falls.

## **2. Educating citizens about the four most common causes of vision loss.**

The Ohio Optometric Association has developed the Adult Vision Simulator Card, which you all have before you. It can be used to aid in educational programs within our communities. By demonstrating to those with normal vision the effects of cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration, and diabetic retinopathy, we can better educate the public about the importance of a lifetime of comprehensive eye care. As all of these problems increase with increasing age, it is especially important that we educate the elderly within our communities. Also, as both glaucoma and diabetes are more common in African Americans, it is vital that we educate them about these very important diseases.

## **3. Removing barriers of attitude and location**

Barriers come in all shapes. They are not only physical, but may be cultural or attitudinal. Something as seemingly benign as a negative tone of voice on the phone may become a

barrier to a patient seeking care. By being sure that we and our staffs are sensitive to patients of all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, we can knock down barriers to access. A warm and sincere tone of voice and a caring attitude can go a long way toward serving all patients in need.

By being willing to provide transportation for patients, or by taking eye care to patients, we can ensure that the visual needs of all older Americans are met. For educational and governmental institutions, opening clinics in underserved areas can go a long way toward accomplishing this goal. In Central Ohio, the Ohio State University College of Optometry, along with a community organization known as Access Health Columbus, is opening a clinic in southern Franklin County to provide access to eye care to a currently underserved population.